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President: Mr. Kerim ..... (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia))

In the absence of the President, Mr. Ileka (Democratic Republic of the Congo), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 19 (*continued*)

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General (A/62/345)

Draft resolution (A/62/L.7)

Mr. Al-Najem (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country's delegation is pleased to congratulate Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and to thank him for his sincere efforts to ensure success in Afghanistan and to achieve peace and stability there. His continuous efforts have included his personal visit to Afghanistan in July and his presiding over the Rome Conference on The Rule of Law in Afghanistan. His efforts also included alternately presiding with President K[illegible]zai over the high-level meetin[illegible] on Afghanistan held last September in the margins of the general debate during the sixty-second session of the General Assembly. We also wish to commend the efforts of his Special Representative for Afghanistan and of United Nations staff, who continue to carry out their duties under difficult and increasingly dangerous circumstances and whose courage and dedication have been fundamental in achieving progress on the ground in Afghanistan.

We would also like to thank the representative of Germany for introducing the draft resolution (A/62/L.7) on the situation in Afghanistan. My country supports that draft resolution, which emphasizes the key and impartial role of the United Nations in strengthening peace and stability in Afghanistan by leading the efforts of the international community.

Recurring wars in the course of more than two decades have caused tremendous damage in all areas of life in Afghanistan. They have taken a heavy toll in lives and caused the destruction of infrastructure in the areas of water, electricity services, transportation, communications, education and health care. They have also led to the collapse of the economic and financial systems and for the deterioration of the basic agricultural infrastructure.

As the transition in Afghanistan comes under increasing strain due to the insurgency, weak governance and an economy based on drugs, the Government of Afghanistan, with the support of the international community, will need to demonstrate political will by boldly taking the initiative in each of those areas and working to restore confidence among the population in tangible ways. As the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan (A/62/345) points out, without stronger leadership from the Government, greater donor coherence — including improved coordination between the military and the civilian international engagement in Afghanistan — and a strong commitment from neighbouring countries, many of the security,

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institution-building and development gains made since the Bonn Conference may yet stall or even be reversed.

The State of Kuwait strongly condemns the rise in violence and suicide attacks in Afghanistan, in particular in the southern and eastern provinces, due to an increase in acts of violence and terrorism carried out by the Taliban movement, Al-Qaida, other militant groups, and groups active in the drug trade. That has led to an increase in the number of victims among the Afghan civilian population, the Afghan national security forces, the International Security Assistance Force, the coalition forces of Operation Enduring Freedom, employees of Afghan and international aid agencies and those working in the field of humanitarian assistance.

In addition to the progress made in numerous areas — such as in disarming, demobilizing and reintegrating child soldiers from Afghan military forces and in providing care for other children injured in the war — achievements in the areas of mine action, developing the Afghan National Army and Police and enhancing their capabilities, strengthening Afghan and international commitment to reforming the judiciary and integrating Afghanistan into the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation also provide opportunities to increase regional economic cooperation for development. However, the pace of change in the living conditions of the Afghan people is still very slow and is a source of increasing frustration for the civilian population.

The continued increase in opium production is an ever-greater threat to stability and nation-building in Afghanistan: the cultivation of opium, the production and trafficking in drugs and the increasingly strong links between the drug trade and the terrorist activities of extremist groups all pose a serious threat to security, the rule of law and development. That requires that the Government pay greater attention to the dangers posed by drugs and that it prosecute smugglers. With support from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the international community must support an Afghan Government integrated plan of action in that regard.

The State of Kuwait urgently appeals to all Member States, the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations to continue to provide Afghanistan with all the humanitarian assistance it needs, in close cooperation with the Government of Afghanistan and in accordance with its national development strategies.

In that regard, the State of Kuwait has contributed to the reconstruction of Afghanistan by donating $4 million over the past five years to support United Nations efforts to help the Afghans and Afghan refugees. The Kuwait Fund for Economic Development granted a loan of $30 million in fulfilment of the commitments we made at the Tokyo Conference, $15 million of which was earmarked for the now-completed reconstruction of the highway between Kandahar and Spin Boldak and $15 million for the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund.

The assistance provided by the Kuwaiti Red Crescent Society during the past five years exceeds $6.5 million. Other Kuwaiti charities and organizations are also continuing to provide assistance.

Finally, we hope that the international organization will continue its efforts to assist the Afghan Government to strengthen peace and stability in Afghanistan. That will in turn have a positive impact on the situation in the region and enable Afghanistan to resume its natural role in the international community.

Mr. Shinyo (Japan): Japan appreciates this opportunity today to discuss the situation in Afghanistan in the General Assembly. We thank the delegation of Germany for preparing the draft resolution (A/62/L.7) before us. As a sponsor, Japan fully supports the draft resolution. I believe that the adoption of the draft resolution will demonstrate the renewed will of Member States to support Afghanistan.

With the organization and strengthening of Afghan Government institutions, there has been progress in nation-building in Afghanistan since the international community agreed the Afghanistan Compact, two years ago. We welcome those developments and commend the Afghan Government for its tireless efforts in that regard.

At the same time, however, we must acknowledge the worrisome reality of the current conditions in the country. As the draft resolution illustrates, the challenges facing Afghanistan are intertwined and are yet to be resolved. The international community must coordinate its efforts at effective and efficient assistance. Next year, Japan will host a meeting of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB). To date, the JCMB has been the most useful framework to

coordinate and prioritize international assistance and reconstruction programmes. We look forward to discussing at the next meeting how we can better deliver our assistance to the nation.

I would like to take this opportunity to stress the pivotal role that the United Nations has played in leading international efforts. Japan appreciates the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, which has expanded its presence in the provinces under difficult conditions. We pay tribute to its staff for their dedication. Japan also extends its appreciation to Mr. Tom Koenigs, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, for his dedicated efforts. We wish his successor further success, building on the achievements of Mr. Koenigs.

Improving the security situation is the most pressing of the various tasks to be addressed. While we take note of the strengthening of the Afghan National Army and the efforts to reform the Afghan National Police, the growing frequency of terrorist acts is a matter of great concern for us. We must not allow terrorism to prevail in Afghanistan. We must not let Afghanistan revert to being a safe haven for terrorists. It is essential that the international community continue to present a united front in the fight against terrorism.

We also wish to underscore the continuing importance of the tenacious activities of the International Security Assistance Force and the Operation Enduring Freedom coalition, including its maritime interdiction component.

In order to play a responsible role in the international community's joint efforts, Japan's Maritime Self-Defence Force has been refuelling vessels of the maritime interdiction component of the Operation Enduring Freedom coalition, based on its anti-terrorism special measures law. Although Japan had to terminate refuelling activities due to the expiration of the law on 2 November, the Government of Japan will continue its effort to achieve the early enactment of the new law that is now under consideration at the Diet to provide a legal basis for the resumption of such refuelling activities as soon as possible.

As stressed in the draft resolution, the disbandment of illegal armed groups is one of the keys to stabilizing the country. Much needs to be done in that area, building on the results of the Tokyo Conference held in June, in particular improving coordination between disbandment and police reform efforts and other security-sector reform activities.

Other issues, such as narcotics and corruption, are also impeding nation-building in Afghanistan. Japan places importance on a comprehensive approach, with capacity-building at its core, in addressing those issues. In addition to assistance in the amount of $1.24 billion already provided, we will continue to explore possibilities to extend further assistance in response to the requests of the Afghan people.

Japan will assume the chairmanship of the Group of Eight next year. Notwithstanding the challenges ahead of us, we look forward to working with our partners in the international community for the stabilization and reconstruction of Afghanistan.

Mr. Hanesson (Iceland): Iceland, as a member of the European Economic Area but not of the European Union (EU), has aligned itself with the statement made by the representative of Portugal on behalf of the EU. However, I would, in addition, like to make a few remarks.

Allow me first of all to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (A/62/345) on the current situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security. As in previous years, Iceland is a traditional sponsor of the draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan, contained this year in document A/62/L.7. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the delegation of Germany for preparing and facilitating the draft resolution.

The report of the Secretary-General clearly indicates that Afghanistan has made significant progress towards political, economic and social development since the fall of the Taliban. An important case in point is the immense growth in schooling for Afghanistan's children, including for girls. However, the report also clearly identifies the serious and complex challenges and threats that Afghanistan still faces, and underscores the need for a comprehensive approach.

Much more remains to be done with regard to institution-building, strengthening the rule of law and the practice of good governance. Afghan ownership is a key issue in that regard, as my German colleague

stated this morning. In that connection, the United Nations is key to coordinating the efforts of the international community. I would like to express our gratitude to, and admiration of, the way in which United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan is working in Afghanistan under the leadership of Tom Koenigs, often in very difficult and dangerous environments.

The security situation in Afghanistan remains a cause for concern and continues to undermine reconstruction and confidence-building efforts. The work of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), led by NATO, is crucial in that context. The increasing role and effectiveness of the Afghan National Army, the Afghan National Security Forces and the Afghan National Police are also vital elements in uprooting the insurgency and ensuring long-term security in cooperation with ISAF. We welcome the conclusions contained in the Secretary-General's report regarding the need for an effective, integrated civilian-military strategy and security plan for Afghanistan.

Iceland strongly condemns attacks against civilians and international staff intended to undermine the democratic process. The increase in violence and in the Taliban-led insurgency has grave implications for the human rights and humanitarian situation. We note with the greatest concern that there has been an overall increase in reported violence against women across the country.

We remain concerned about the continued increase in opium production and poppy growing, which reached record levels this year, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Opium production and narcotics trafficking undermine reconstruction and nation-building in Afghanistan. We must increase our efforts, including through regional cooperation, to combat this evil at all levels. Drug traffickers must be brought to justice. Here, we would emphasize the vital role of the UNODC.

The Government of Afghanistan also needs to take firm measures to tackle corruption and weak governance, which are serious obstacles to economic and social development. Indeed, the draft resolution before us expresses deep concern about those developments.

We strongly support the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, which has an important supporting role to play in confidence-building and promoting respect for human rights.

Iceland is firmly committed to making its contribution to peacebuilding efforts in Afghanistan. In 2004, Iceland played the leading role in the operation of Kabul international airport by providing the Commander of the airport base, and since then we have provided technical and support staff to facilitate that operation. Iceland now deploys half of its personnel working in international peacekeeping operations to the Mission in Afghanistan and is currently looking at further options aimed at rebuilding and supporting the infrastructure in the country.

The international community must stand united in rebuilding Afghanistan and strengthening its democracy. Achieving our goals in Afghanistan depends on long-term political commitment on the part of all stakeholders, the Government of Afghanistan and the international community. Increased regional cooperation and strong commitment by neighbouring countries is also of the utmost importance. The United Nations has a key role to play in such efforts. Iceland remains firmly committed to supporting the United Nations and other international partners in building a secure and democratic Afghanistan.

Ms. Banks (New Zealand): We recognize that Afghanistan faces serious ongoing challenges and that it will require assistance from the international community for some time to come. Considerable effort is being directed to helping with the development of the Afghanistan National Army and Police so that Afghanistan will eventually be able to provide for its own security. However, there is no military solution to the problems of Afghanistan; military and policing inputs need to be complemented by development initiatives aimed at building Afghanistan's State institutions and its economy. We hope that the overall international and local effort can be better brought together in order to make more rapid progress.

Opium production is undermining the future of Afghanistan. Alongside eradication, the international community needs to commit to the development of alternative sustainable livelihoods. The Afghan people will support an international presence only if they believe that it will improve their lives, their security and their prosperity. That requires an approach that fully integrates the political, security, economic and social aspects of peacebuilding.

The United Nations, through the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), has a central role to play in coordinating international assistance to Afghanistan, and also in helping the Government to rebuild the country's civil institutions. In addition, the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board, established under the Afghanistan Compact to oversee the implementation of the Compact and of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, is a critical mechanism to improve overall coordination. Afghanistan's neighbours have an important role to play, as the pace of development will be affected by the degree to which those States assist in the rebuilding process and cooperate with Afghanistan to improve its security.

Afghanistan's economic development needs to be greatly accelerated. Afghan producers need assured access to profitable markets, internally and in neighbouring countries, if the Afghan people are to be given the opportunity to move from being reliant on aid to being self-sustaining and responsible for their own economic choices.

Since 2001, New Zealand has made a substantial commitment to the international effort to secure and rebuild Afghanistan. We contribute to UNAMA. We are also an active contributor to NATO's International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. New Zealand's Provincial Reconstruction Team provides security in Bamian province. In Bamian, the New Zealand Defence Force works closely with the New Zealand Agency for International Development and the New Zealand Police. We have worked to make a practical difference: improving the lives of the people of Bamian. We also provide training to the Afghan police there. We have helped with the construction of schools, roads, bridges and a maternity ward.

We all recognize that Afghanistan faces difficult social, political, economic and security challenges. The Government and the people of Afghanistan are courageously taking up the challenge of addressing those challenges, in particular through efforts to develop resilient and sustainable Afghan National Army and Police forces. Nevertheless, the extent of the challenge will require sustained commitment and continuity of effort from the international community.

In closing, I should like to express our support for the draft resolution on Afghanistan (A/62/L.7) and to thank Germany for its role in facilitating that consensus text.

Mr. Shervani (India): Let me begin by expressing India's appreciation for the scheduling of this discussion on a subject of great significance for us, our region and the world. I also commend the outstanding effort by the delegation of Germany in coordinating the intergovernmental negotiations that have brought forth this improved version of the annual General Assembly draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan (A/62/L.7). We are happy to continue to sponsor this draft resolution, which should be adopted by consensus, as in the past.

Today, the General Assembly has the opportunity to review developments since the high-level meeting held in this building nearly two months ago, which was presided over by the Secretary-General and President Karzai. We welcome the communiqué adopted at that meeting as a symbol of the international community's commitment to the stabilization and reconstruction of Afghanistan in an involvement that must be long-term if it is to succeed. Today's draft resolution is a further sign of our collective determination.

The international community shares the goal of creating a peaceful, stable and democratic Afghanistan, securely restored to the path of socio-economic development and anchored within its region. The central challenge we face in achieving that objective is the need for a security environment that is conducive to addressing the challenges in a developing nation that has undergone unparalleled levels of destruction and privation. We must collectively upgrade our efforts, directly and indirectly, to restore security to Afghanistan. At the same time, we must expand direct assistance in reconstruction and development while simultaneously developing capacities in Afghanistan to enable maximum local involvement in nation-building. Those aspects are reflected in the resolution before us.

The international community needs to consider whether it has done all it can to avoid duplication and improve coordination on the ground in Afghanistan and whether the targets we have set are achievable and based on ground realities. In all candour, there is room to fine-tune our efforts in both areas.

First, we need to set realistic and achievable benchmarks of progress. They must be based on the reality of where Afghanistan is coming from, rather than reflect an idealized version of what we expect

Afghanistan to be. That is essential if the national ownership of our Afghan partners of the development process is to have genuine meaning.

Second, we must expand coordination on the ground, both among ourselves and with Afghan interlocutors. Assistance must be more closely linked to Afghan priorities, as reflected in the National Development Strategy and the Afghanistan Compact. The challenge for us is to transform our commitments into realistic, coordinated and effective strategies and concrete outcomes on the ground, including through the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board.

Therefore, our collective goal must be to set ourselves reasonable expectations and build upon the significant successes recorded thus far, while recognizing that the road ahead will be long. We must redouble our political and economic commitment to help Afghanistan over the medium to long term, and maintain our resolve in the face of challenges in the short term.

Of these challenges, none is more of a test of our collective will than that posed by the Taliban, Al-Qaida and other terrorist and extremist groups. This threat is the key — and I repeat, the key — challenge to our collective efforts in Afghanistan, and its first objective is to weaken our resolve. Therefore, we cannot afford to underestimate the ongoing resurgence of terrorist groups.

India fully supports the Afghan position that the challenge of terrorism — especially the recent and growing trend of suicide attacks, cross-border infiltration and the growing nexus between terrorism and drug trafficking — requires both a robust international political solution and a stronger military response at the local level. We need to display our sustained resolve, while steadily fortifying the ability of Afghan agencies to respond to this challenge.

Most of all, terrorism must be addressed realistically, on the basis of a clear-eyed perception of what and who are involved and how to respond to all aspects of the problem. We must not be tempted by partial solutions that provide temporary and local relief; terrorism cannot be fought piecemeal.

A sustainable strategy for stabilization of Afghanistan must be predicated upon short-, medium- and long-term strategies to address the developmental challenge. The efforts of the international community in Afghanistan can be sustained over the long term only if we invest in developing Afghan human resources. For that, a multipronged approach is required. At one level, we must invest in rebuilding the economic and social infrastructure of the nation, while generating jobs. At another, we must progressively transfer skills and authority to our Afghan friends, to enable them to take fuller ownership of the reconstruction of their country.

India is fully committed to implementing the benchmarks of the Afghanistan Compact and to addressing the interrelated security, political and developmental challenges facing Afghanistan. Our commitment to reconstruction, development and capacity-building in Afghanistan is unflinching. India's assistance programme, in place since the Berlin Conference, has now reached $750 million. Of this total pledge, India has already disbursed around $300 million in the implementation of assistance projects that span the gamut of requirements, ranging from capacity-building to infrastructure creation and reconstruction.

Capacity-building is a priority area for India. Thus far, we have trained more than 2,700 Afghan citizens in India, including students and public officials. We are also implementing a capacity development programme in public administration, in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme, to depute 30 Indian civil servants to assist in Afghan ministries. In addition, India is including a strong capacity development component in all infrastructure projects it is executing in Afghanistan.

Apart from ongoing megainfrastructure projects, India is also focusing on small development projects. These include endeavours requiring the participation of local communities and aimed at providing direct peace dividends in areas that are yet to see development. India has worked to align its assistance programmes with Afghan priorities, focusing on local implementation, management and ownership of assets.

Regional cooperation is also a key pillar to stabilizing Afghanistan. Regional economic cooperation is an important benchmark of the Afghanistan Compact and is a strategic element of its National Development Strategy. Afghanistan's entry into the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation in April 2007 will not only further strengthen its historical links with the South Asian

region, but will also provide the region lasting benefits in free trade and shared economic activities. All of this has the potential to contribute, in turn, to the stabilization of Afghanistan itself, but also of our region. In this context, several important regional cooperation events have taken place over the past few years, including the Regional Economic Cooperation Conferences in Kabul and New Delhi.

However, the central challenge in our region is the need to develop measures to implement programmes evolved in regional processes. These include resolving impediments that hinder the expansion of commercial and economic linkages, including barriers to effective overland trade and transit, limited regional trade and business linkages, and other measures that can contribute to the early realization of Afghanistan's historic role as a land bridge between South Asia, Central Asia and West Asia. At the same time, our region also needs to consider ways of addressing regional and transregional political and security challenges, such as cross-border terrorism, cooperation in regional enforcement and in identifying collective approaches to expand governance and enforcement capacities.

It is our conviction that the best riposte to those who challenge the supportive role of the international community in Afghanistan is to display our heightened resolve. At the same time, we must also work together in a more effective partnership with one another and the Government of Afghanistan. Most of all, we should expand regional cooperation in the common interest of all. Finally, our efforts to achieve greater donor coherence need to be paralleled by efforts to build incrementally on the many impressive successes recorded thus far.

These are the key elements for us to build upon the gains collectively made since the fall of the Taliban.

Mr. McNee (Canada): Canada appreciates this opportunity to address the General Assembly on the situation in Afghanistan. Canada, alongside a large group of Member States, has participated in cooperative efforts, skilfully led by the German delegation, to produce today's draft resolution (A/62/L.7) on Afghanistan. We are extremely pleased to co-sponsor its passage.

The breadth of the draft resolution, and its eventual adoption by consensus by the entire membership of the General Assembly, demonstrates the depth of the international community's engagement in Afghanistan. It also signals our collective intention to continue to support the Afghan Government. But however strong the text may be, the draft resolution will only be as effective as our collective resolve to implement it. That means building on the gains achieved to date, while confronting continuing challenges with action. Thanks to the fortitude of the Afghan people, the tireless work of the Afghan Government and the growing engagement of the international community, those efforts are bearing fruit.

Afghans are beginning to emerge from poverty, with the help of small loans. The Afghan army is increasingly able to defend Afghan sovereignty and a new generation of Afghan children is learning to read and write. Those are important gains, achieved against daunting odds. Afghans and the international community should be proud of those accomplishments, but realistic about their fragility and candid about the areas in which progress is still urgently required.

The draft resolution before us is clear: for those achievements to be sustained, Afghanistan and the international community must do more. We must do more to enhance regional cooperation. We must do more to support the development of a professional Afghan police force. We must do more to strengthen the Afghan justice system. Success in each of those areas is fundamental to Afghanistan's future.

Shared problems require shared solutions. Thousands of people travel between Afghanistan and Pakistan every day. Legitimate trade between the two countries has been increasing considerably. The potential for Afghanistan to generate customs revenue is great. Capitalizing on that potential will require constructive collaboration on practical management measures. It will also involve intensive efforts to ensure that insurgents, illicit drugs and arms do not cross into Afghanistan.

Confidence- and capacity-building between Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as other regional partners, will be critical. In that vein, Canada welcomes the results of the Afghanistan-Pakistan peace jirga, and urges both States to begin to address important issues highlighted during that historic event. Canada stands ready to work with the Afghan and Pakistani Governments to advance the conclusions of that meeting.

Afghanistan's future will also depend on a professional, effective and respected national police force — one that will serve as the cornerstone of Afghanistan's long-term domestic security and build public confidence in the national Government. Canada therefore welcomes the draft resolution's call for accelerated efforts to professionalize and strengthen the Afghan National Police. Canada is assisting the policing sector through the provision of training, infrastructure and salary support. However, progress in police development will require more coherent action by the Afghan Government and its international partners.

(*spoke in French*)

A strong justice sector is necessary in order to ensure that the primacy of the rule is well understood and respected in the entire country in the future. Along with the draft resolution's other sponsors, Canada calls on the Afghan Government to finalize its national justice sector strategy and national justice programme. We also call on our international partners to help provide the necessary support for the Afghan justice system. Moreover, Afghanistan and its international partners must honour the commitments made this year at the Rome Conference. Canada intends to do its part in that regard, including by supporting the priority projects identified at the Conference by the Afghan Government.

Canada would like to take this opportunity to express its appreciation to the United Nations for its central role and impartiality in efforts made in Afghanistan. In all of the areas to which I have referred today — regional cooperation, policing and justice sector reform — the United Nations must provide strong leadership with a view to ensuring that Afghanistan can continue to make progress down the path of security and independence.

As the primary representative of the international community in Afghanistan, the United Nations must also enhance its coordinating role, in particular by deepening and expanding its presence. To that end, Canada remains committed to supporting the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and United Nations agencies active on the ground.

In conclusion, we encourage other Member States to ensure that the United Nations is endowed with the capacity and latitude needed to continue to exercise leadership in support of the Government of Afghanistan and all Afghans.

Mr. Khazaee (Islamic Republic of Iran): May I begin by extending our gratitude to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive reports on various aspects of the situation in Afghanistan. I would also like to thank him and his Special Representative, as well as all their colleagues in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, for their unwavering commitment and commendable dedication to the consolidation of peace and stability in Afghanistan. We continue to stress and support the central and essential role that the United Nations is playing in Afghanistan.

In the past several years, by taking various steps to establish democratic institutions and a vibrant political system, the Afghan people, led by President Karzai, have demonstrated their firm commitment to a stable and democratic future. Moreover, the most recent report (A/62/345) of the Secretary-General on Afghanistan highlights a number of promising improvements in the economic and social fields. That includes in particular valuable achievements with regard to economic growth, education, health, building infrastructure and rural development. We commend the Afghan people for those remarkable achievements. We assure them of our ongoing full support in their endeavours to rebuild their country.

Despite those remarkable accomplishments, much remains to be done. As indicated by the Secretary-General in his report, the security situation in the country and the threat of opium production and drug trafficking have increased and continue to be of grave concern.

Increased terrorist attacks and violence in certain parts of Afghanistan caused by Al-Qaida, the Taliban and other criminal and terrorist groups, coupled with a pervasive drug economy and an increase in the production and trafficking of narcotic drugs, have created alarming challenges that seriously undermine the security of the country and beyond.

As an immediate neighbour of Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran has a vital interest in a stable, secure and prosperous Afghanistan and in an Afghanistan free from terrorism and extremism. Iran has always been unequivocal in its condemnation of the heinous terrorist acts committed in Afghanistan and has extended its full support to the efforts of the

Afghan Government to improve the security and economic situation in the country. We believe that the increase in insecurity in Afghanistan and the recent increase in terrorist activities clearly suggest that the unwarranted attempts made by certain foreign Powers in Afghanistan to appease some terrorist groups and elements have proved to be wrong and counterproductive.

Undoubtedly, to address the insecurity in Afghanistan, full national ownership of Afghans over the security of their country should be expedited. That can be done through, inter alia, strengthening the autonomy and integrity of the Afghan National Security Forces and increasing home-grown security. The reconstruction of infrastructure, capacity-building and utilizing regional potentials for the reconstruction of the country can also contribute to the improvement of the situation in Afghanistan.

Unfortunately, as a producer of 93 per cent of the world's opiates, Afghanistan is experiencing the biggest opium harvest in its history. The cultivation and production of and trafficking in narcotic drugs in Afghanistan, which adversely affect that country's economic reconstruction and undermine its stability and security, along with those of the wider region, especially neighbouring countries, continue unabated.

In our view, the impact of a pervasive drug economy on the security, rehabilitation and reconstruction of Afghanistan, and the fact that terrorism and insurgency feed on drug production and trafficking, should always be kept in sight in all efforts to address the security situation and reconstruction of Afghanistan. Combating that menace requires a long-term and multifaceted strategy and more serious efforts by Afghanistan and the international community. Indeed, the present situation attests to the bitter fact that the international community has not yet been successful in curbing the scourge of narcotic drugs in Afghanistan, and those foreign forces in the country that have been entrusted with certain responsibilities in that regard have not fulfilled their task satisfactorily.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has fought, almost single-handedly, a costly and deadly war against heavily armed drug traffickers. As I stated in a meeting of the Security Council, over the past 25 years we have lost about 4,000 of our great and brave law enforcement personnel, who have sacrificed their lives to fight that vicious threat. We continue to be resolute at the forefront of the worldwide war against drug traffickers and encourage others to join us in that important fight in order to save our present as well as future generations from the devastating impacts of the calamity.

By pledging more than half a billion dollars in grants and credits to the reconstruction of Afghanistan, Iran has been actively participating in the country's reconstruction. We have been engaged in various infrastructure activities in Afghanistan, including road construction, manpower training, electricity projects, humanitarian services and many other projects. Moreover, we have just started the second phase of our development assistance to Afghanistan, granting about $50 million at a demanding time, while several important agreements, including a general agreement on bilateral cooperation and on capacity-building of Afghan ministries were also signed between the two countries during our President's visit to Kabul in August.

Furthermore, Iran has incurred huge costs during the past three decades by hosting almost 3 million Afghan brothers and sisters as refugees. We earnestly hope that conditions in Afghanistan will facilitate the voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees to their home country in a more timely and promising manner.

Before concluding, we are pleased to see the full support of member countries for the draft resolution at hand. Also, allow me to thank the delegation of Germany for its efforts in the negotiating process of the draft resolution before us today.

The Acting President: The General Assembly will now hear a statement by Mr. Alberto Romulo, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines.

Mr. Romulo (Philippines): My delegation welcomes the comprehensive report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan still faces challenges in view of the serious insurgency problem. With the support of the international community, including my own country, which co-sponsored draft resolution A/62/L.7, we are confident that progress in all fronts will improve the situation in Afghanistan.

With the Assembly's kind indulgence, I would now like to touch on agenda item 12, on the topic of new or restored democracies.

The opening years of the post-cold-war era were defined by the immutable gust of democratic wind that lifted many nations to democratic heights. Building on the momentum created by the fresh breeze of democracy, several nations banded together and created the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies (ICNRD). Spanning six international conferences in the past 19 years, that movement remains strong and eager to further invigorate its cooperation with the United Nations.

The first Conference, held in Manila, Philippines, in 1988, and open to all newly restored democracies, accounted for 15 countries that emerged from authoritarian rule to constitutional democracy from 1973 to 1988. Participating countries issued the Manila Declaration, which mainly called for a consultative mechanism for mutual cooperation in times of danger and crisis to their restored democracies.

The second Conference, held in Managua, Nicaragua, in 1994, saw participation grow to 52 countries from a wave of new democracies that emerged between 1989 and the early 1990s. They adopted the Managua Declaration, which introduced a plan of action to promote international dialogue on democracy focused on structural vulnerabilities, the isolated transition process and the common principles and interests of interdependence.

The third Conference, held in Bucharest, Romania, in 1997, had 100 participating countries, including democracies from Eastern and Central Europe. It pushed for the participation of civil society, affirmed the important role of the United Nations, and recognizes that democracy ensures a framework of liberties for lasting solutions to economic, political and social problems.

The fourth Conference, held in Cotonou, Benin, in 2000, had 114 countries from the wave of political liberalization that swept Africa in the mid-1990s. There were many firsts. The Secretary-General attended, civil society held a parallel forum, and regional and international organizations joined in. The Conference highlighted the importance of national responsibility, human rights, political pluralism, people's empowerment, the rule of law, good governance, the freedom of media, and a free civil society.

The fifth Conference, held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, in 2003, was comprehensive in terms of preparation, participation and outcome documents. It noted the global support for democratization at the national, regional and international levels.

The sixth Conference, held in Doha, Qatar, in 2006, was the most elaborate in terms of scope and breadth of participation and outcomes. It institutionalized the tripartite partnership of Governments, parliaments and civil society.

The Philippines is grateful to the United Nations Development Programme and the Department of Political Affairs for the support they have extended to the ICNRD. We look forward to their continued cooperation, as well as that of the rest of the United Nations system, not only in preparation for the triennial conferences, but also throughout the ICNRD process, in particular during the follow-up period. For that reason, my delegation co-sponsored draft resolution A/62/L.9, calling for the support of the United Nations system to promote new or restored democracies.

To enrich and strengthen the ICNRD process, the Philippines wishes to reiterate the recommendations it made in Doha, which were adopted by the Conference.

First, migration and development are essential elements of the ICNRD. Citizens of new or restored democracies are found beyond their borders, assisting both their countries of origin and countries of destination. Their potential to promote development should be both recognized and harnessed, in tandem with respect for and protection of their rights. The United Nations system is likewise invited to mainstream the element of migration and development in its partnership with the ICNRD. In that connection, the Philippines invites Member States and the United Nations system to join us in Manila when we host next year the Second Global Forum on Migration and Development.

Secondly, new or restored democracies are burdened by debt. To breathe life into their painful development process, which can threaten their stability if unattended, the Philippines has proposed an innovative development financing option called Debt For Equity in Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Projects, which would enable 50 per cent of all scheduled debt payments to be converted into equities in MDG-related projects. It will be beneficial to debtor and creditor alike. The scheme can strengthen the resolve of poor indebted countries to fight poverty and

create the needed fundamentals for democracy and sustainable development.

Thirdly, the spirit of reconciliation is needed to ensure durable peace among new or restored democracies through interreligious and intercultural respect, tolerance and understanding. As a key proponent of interfaith dialogue and cooperation, the Philippines invites Governments, the United Nations system and civil society to adhere to the spirit of interfaith dialogue and cooperation for the promotion of peace, development and human dignity.

Finally, the ICNRD follow-up process can effectively prosper given the requisite resources. Thus, my delegation invites the United Nations to set up a trust fund for new or restored democracies, in addition to the Democracy Fund, so that the decisions reached in Doha can come to fruition. My delegation also recommends that the ICNRD secretariat be housed at United Nations Headquarters, representing the United Nations system's tangible expression of support for the ICNRD.

Mrs. Aitimova (Kazakhstan): Kazakhstan fully aligns itself with the statements delivered by the Permanent Representative of the Kyrgyz Republic on behalf of the Collective Security Treaty Organization and by the Permanent Representative of Tajikistan on behalf of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. I will add only a few remarks in my national capacity.

I join my colleagues in commending the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on different aspects of the situation in Afghanistan and for his determination to be personally engaged in working with the Government of Afghanistan and other partners to ensure success in that country.

As President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbaev pointed out in his statement at a General Assembly plenary meeting in September, the difficulties involved in the process of stabilizing the situation in Afghanistan are a matter of concern to Kazakhstan. Peace and security in the entire Central Asian region depend on the stabilization of the situation in Afghanistan, and Kazakhstan is deeply interested in the speedy transition of life in that long-suffering country to a peaceful track and the restoration of its ruined economy.

Kazakhstan supports the central role of the United Nations in leading international efforts to assist the Afghan authorities in bringing lasting peace and prosperity to their country, and welcomes the positive achievements in the political, social and economic spheres as a result of the joint work of the Government of Afghanistan and the international community. We commend the determination of the Government of Afghanistan to contribute to regional security and prosperity, and share the view of the Secretary-General that progress will depend on the international community and the Government of Afghanistan better coordinating their efforts to defeat the insurgency, promote good governance and provide tangible improvements to the lives of Afghans.

As the report of the Secretary-General indicates, the unprecedented increase in opium production in 2007 poses a grave threat to reconstruction and nation-building in Afghanistan. Kazakhstan attaches great importance to the anti-drug activities of the United Nations as the main coordinating centre for international efforts on that track. We fully support the efforts and uncompromising determination of the Organization to overcome the global problem of the illegal drug trade on the basis of increased international cooperation and the development of national strategies to eliminate the illegal supply of and demand for drugs.

Reaffirming its commitment to actively cooperate with the United Nations against illegal drug threat, Kazakhstan has provided all the required conditions to establish within its territory the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre to combat the illegal drug trade, in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and is determined to actively participate in the work of that body.

In the draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan, which we fully support and co-sponsor, it is pointed out that one effective means of promoting security and development in Afghanistan is regional cooperation, and we strongly believe that it is necessary to enable the potential of such regional organizations as the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia, which includes Afghanistan, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and the Collective Security Treaty Organization for the purpose of creating collective security mechanisms in order to cut the channels of financing for terrorist activities and drug trafficking from Afghanistan to Europe.

We fully share the view of the Secretary-General that the Government of Afghanistan must retain the trust of its neighbours by engaging constructively in bilateral and multilateral initiatives, including on counter-narcotics and migration issues, and by building its capacity to manage and deepen complex bilateral relationships. In our view, the active participation of Afghanistan in the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA), which it joined in 2005, will greatly contribute to furthering the integration of Afghanistan into the regional economy. The Programme was initiated by President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbaev in 1997 and is being pursued under the auspices of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. SPECA has great potential in tackling the pressing issues of the region of Central Asia through the promotion of regional cooperation and coordination.

I should like briefly to address the issue of bilateral relations with Afghanistan. The Kazakhstan Government has elaborated a plan of assistance to Afghanistan for 2007-2008. Our country is ready to assist Afghanistan in the reconstruction of communications, house-building, and the development of new oil and gas deposits, as well as in personnel training in the spheres of economics, industry, finance, transport and education. The Government of Kazakhstan already provides 100 scholarships for Afghani students annually, participates in the construction of schools and hospitals, and provides school books for children in some provinces.

In conclusion, I would like to stress the commitment of the Government of Kazakhstan to the long-term reconstruction of Afghanistan and our readiness to participate actively in international and regional programmes in order to reach our common goal of a stable and prosperous Afghanistan.

Mr. Maksom (Malaysia): Let me first extend my delegation's appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report on the situation in Afghanistan, as contained in document A/62/345 of 21 September 2007. The report provides a comprehensive description of the situation in Afghanistan and offers valuable observations on possible course of actions. My delegation also recognizes the valuable work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Mr. Tom Koenigs, and members of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) under the prevailing difficult and challenging conditions in the country.

My delegation congratulates the Government of Afghanistan on its commendable strides in developing the institutional capacities of the different branches of Government to fulfil their mandated responsibilities. We applaud the work carried out in the National Assembly, especially in the final drafting of the draft electoral law and the accompanying law to reform the Independent Electoral Commission, in anticipation of the next presidential and parliamentary elections in 2009 and 2010, respectively. That is a crucial step to further entrench the democratic process in the country. The National Assembly has also succeeded in passing a national budget and is currently working on a number of important laws, including the Advocates Law, the Media Law and a number of laws relevant to key security sector reforms.

My delegation also commends the progress made in improving the Government delivery system, notably in the economic development, education, health and rural development sectors. We are pleased to note the increasing number of children receiving education in Afghanistan, which has reached a record high of 6.07 million, including 2.17 million girls. We also note the improvement in health care, with health coverage reaching 82 per cent of the population. Likewise, the infant mortality rate and maternal mortality rate have been reduced to 3.5 per cent and 6.6 per cent, respectively.

Despite those achievements, we note with concern that the situation in Afghanistan remains fragile. A slight reverse in the security situation, especially with regard to the threat of insurgency and the credibility of the Government's ability to deliver further on the reform process, could undo all the progress made thus far.

In the light of those concerns, my delegation continues to remain apprehensive over the reported deterioration in the security sector. Violent attacks, including suicide attacks attributed to Al Qaeda, the Taliban and other armed extremist groups, have increased in the course of the year, especially in the southern and eastern provinces. We note the increase in violent incidents per month from 425 in 2006 to nearly 548 in the first three quarters of 2007, including a total of 100 suicide attacks. Those incidents have claimed many civilian lives. More alarming are the number of

deaths and injuries of a large and increasing number of civilians and non-combatants caused by the combat operations of both pro- and anti-Government forces. UNAMA recorded some 1,000 civilian deaths from January to 31 August. More efforts must therefore be made to protect civilians.

My delegation also views with concern the deteriorating narcotics situation in Afghanistan. In spite of the Government's counter-narcotic efforts, poppy cultivation has increased by 17 per cent, which potentially increases opium production by 34 per cent, thus making Afghanistan the world's main opium producing country. That situation has far-reaching security repercussions both for Afghanistan and countries beyond its borders. At the domestic level, the burgeoning poppy cultivation is creating a growing nexus between the narcotics trade and insurgent groups, and is feared to finance terrorism. Moreover, narcotics trade activities further exacerbate the corruption problem within Government and provincial machineries, which in the end may seriously erode the credibility and capacity of the Government.

We share the view that a resolution of the situation in Afghanistan would require an integrated and concerted civilian and military approach. Military actions alone will not be sufficient to overcome the root causes of the problem. The Government delivery system, including good governance and respect for human rights, should be improved to foster confidence in and the credibility of the Government among the Afghan population. There is also a need to carry out an all-inclusive national reconciliation process to avoid the marginalization of any group.

My delegation firmly believes that the sustained support of the international community remains indispensable if Afghanistan is to overcome the immediate challenges and to help it implement the National Development Strategy, which offers a viable prospect for lasting political stability and economic prosperity. We reiterate our support for UNAMA's continuing to play the central and impartial role in galvanizing different elements of international support and monitoring the implementation of the development and security strategies on the ground, in close consultation with the Afghan Government.

On Malaysia's part, we reiterate our commitment to cooperating and working closely with Afghanistan and, where appropriate, other members of the international community. We will continue to extend assistance to Afghanistan under the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme to develop the much needed-human capital in various fields for Afghanistan's development.

Mr. Lee Do-hoon (Republic of Korea): Allow me to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the situation in Afghanistan (A/62/345). Our thanks also go to the delegation of Germany for coordinating the important draft resolution on the subject (A/62/L.7). The Republic of Korea is pleased to join the sponsors of the draft resolution.

Since the adoption of the Bonn Agreement in 2001, Afghanistan has achieved important political progress, despite many continuing challenges, culminating in the first-ever direct presidential election in October 2004, and parliamentary elections in September 2005. The international community must continue to work closely with Afghanistan to ensure that these successes have a lasting impact. We should not underestimate what has been accomplished, but neither should we believe that our work is nearing completion. There is still much to be done before comprehensive peace and recovery are achieved in Afghanistan.

As the Secretary-General's report acknowledges, a deteriorating security situation, coupled with uncontrolled violence and criminal drug trafficking, hamper not only the reconstruction process, but also the implementation of Afghanistan's national development strategy.

My delegation is deeply concerned about the continuing instability in some parts of Afghanistan. The gravity of the situation is underlined by the recent cases of abduction and murder of Afghan and foreign civilians, including the Taliban's kidnapping of 23 citizens of the Republic of Korea, two of whom were subsequently killed.

We agree with the Secretary-General's report that re-establishing lasting security requires a multidimensional strategy coordinating military, police, political and economic and social activities. Essential to the success of that strategy are the efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and the International Security Assistance Force, as well as the coalition forces of Operation Enduring Freedom, working in close coordination with

the Government of Afghanistan and the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board.

We are also concerned by the increasing threat that drug trafficking poses to the national security, social development and governance of Afghanistan. Until the Afghan people can find other sources of income, many will continue to engage in that criminal business. We therefore share the view that the international community and the Afghan Government should work together to deal with that serious problem, which affects almost every aspect of Afghanistan's security and development.

The Republic of Korea strongly hopes that Afghanistan will continue to work towards fully implementing the national drug control strategy presented by its Government at the London Conference, and stands ready to join the international support for the strategy by contributing to the Counter-Narcotics Trust Fund.

To deal with those ongoing challenges, active efforts by the Afghan Government in a spirit of Afghan ownership must go hand in hand with assistance from the international community. In that regard, we note that many countries, including the Republic of Korea, have announced new financial assistance for Afghanistan since the London Conference. We believe that those announcements demonstrate donors' continuing confidence in Afghanistan.

The Republic of Korea has strongly supported the reconstruction process of Afghanistan. Building upon our contribution of approximately $60 million in grant aid to Afghanistan from 2001 to 2005, we have set aside $20 million for the subsequent three-year period for projects focusing on human resources development, agricultural and rural development and public administration. In addition, engineering and medical units from our armed forces have been contributing to the Afghan reconstruction process since their deployment in February 2002.

As a sponsor of the draft resolution on Afghanistan now before us, the Republic of Korea once again pledges to renew its unwavering support for the people and Government of Afghanistan in their pursuit of peace and prosperity.

Mr. Çorman (Turkey): Turkey aligns itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Portugal on behalf of the European Union. However, given the importance we attach to the situation in Afghanistan, as well as our extensive involvement in the reconstruction efforts in that country, I would like to briefly add our voice to the debate.

The draft resolution we are to adopt today (A/62/L.7) and the great number of sponsors supporting it underline the priority of Afghanistan on our common agenda. It also demonstrates the determination of the international community to assist and support the Afghan people during their difficult times.

In fact, we have already started to see some positive results of that common endeavour. With the help of the international community, much has been achieved during the last few years reflecting the genuine desire of the Afghan people for an independent and democratic Afghanistan. Yet, there are many factors which prevent us from becoming all too optimistic. The security situation is still precarious; terrorists are now resorting to different tactics, such as suicide bombs and kidnappings; poppy production continues; and there are still certain problems of governance.

That said, those rather discouraging factors should not dishearten us in helping the Afghan people and Government. On the contrary, they should oblige us to redouble our efforts in assisting Afghanistan in a more efficient and result-oriented way.

For Turkey's part, we do all we can to contribute to the security and stability of Afghanistan in line with our centuries-old ties of close friendship with the Afghan people. Indeed, following our lead in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF II and ISAF VII), we have continued to maintain our active participation in the Force by assuming the leadership of the Regional Command in Kabul as of April 2007. Together with recent reinforcements, we now have about 1,200 troops in Afghanistan.

However, we all know that achieving our goals in Afghanistan requires more than military means alone. Indeed, issues such as unemployment, health care, access to clean water, and electricity shortages occupy the minds of the Afghan people at least as much as security considerations. Thus we need a comprehensive and practical approach.

It is true that serious projects are already underway to address the shortcomings in those areas

and improve the infrastructure of the country. But many of the projects require a long time to be completed. The Afghan people, however, need to see tangible and rapid changes in their daily lives. Therefore, providing new employment opportunities, ensuring the delivery of basic services and generating a viable local economy should be among our leading priorities. To that end, we must utilize the services of more Afghan companies and employ more Afghan personnel in our projects.

Turkey, for its part, is certainly committed to doing so. That is why Afghan participation and ownership is a key principle that guides us in all the development and reconstruction projects we continue to carry out in various parts of Afghanistan.

In that regard, our projects are concentrated mainly in those areas that can make a most immediate and visible impact on the lives of the Afghan people, such as health, education, agriculture and construction activities. For instance Turkish-built, equipped and operated health centres in Afghanistan provide free medical treatment to some 900 patients a day. The number of Afghan citizens who received such medical treatment in those health centres has so far exceeded 750,000.

We have also built and equipped 27 schools in various parts of Afghanistan, which provide modern education to almost 40,000 Afghan students — girls and boys alike. In addition to 13 new schools that will be completed soon, Turkish non-governmental organizations are also running 6 private schools across the country. Likewise, the number of safe drinking-water wells drilled by Turkey across the country has already exceeded 60 and we have many more in the pipeline.

On the other hand, one of the most tangible examples of our commitment to the Afghan people's stability and prosperity is the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) that we established one year ago in the province of Wardak. This PRT carries out various projects ranging from police training to literacy courses for Afghan girls and women, from electricity interconnection to agricultural development.

No matter how much we strive to improve the security and economic environment inside Afghanistan, regional cooperation remains key to ensuring long-term stability in Afghanistan and beyond. With this in mind, Turkey is working closely with all the regional countries, in particular with Pakistan and Afghanistan. In this regard, we have initiated a trilateral mechanism to build confidence and diversify areas of cooperation between the two countries.

As mentioned in the draft resolution before the Assembly (A/62/L.7), the Ankara process, which was launched at the trilateral summit meeting held in Turkey on 29 and 30 April 2007, is an important means for strengthening regional cooperation, and we are committed to taking it forward with concrete projects.

As a final word, I would like to stress once again that achieving our common goals in Afghanistan will not be an easy or swift process. We all must be ready for a long-term engagement in Afghanistan. We should also prepare public opinion and parliaments accordingly. We ought to realize that failure is not an option. Indeed, Afghanistan remains a central element in our efforts to achieve global security, and, if we do not succeed, no one will be spared from the dire consequences.

The United Nations has a central role to play in coordinating the efforts of the international community and assisting the Afghan Government in its endeavours to achieve lasting peace and stability. Under the able leadership of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan much has already been achieved to this end under extremely difficult circumstances. The Afghanistan Compact, in particular, has provided a most useful road map. However, we believe there is still room for an even more active and robust engagement on the part of the United Nations. Thus, we hope that the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General will, when appointed, carry the banner even further and enable the United Nations to utilize its full capacity. Turkey is committed to exerting every effort in support of the United Nations and Afghanistan.

In conclusion, I would like to express our sincere thanks to the German Mission for leading the consultations on the draft resolution before us today. We are pleased to be sponsoring it and hope that it will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Vohidov (Uzbekistan) (*spoke in Russian*): The delegation of the Republic of Uzbekistan fully supports today's statements by the Permanent Representative of Tajikistan to the United Nations on behalf of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and by the Permanent Representative of the Kyrgyz

Republic on behalf of the member States of the Collective Security Treaty Organization. We share the main points set out in those statements.

Our country is a direct neighbour of Afghanistan and has shared many centuries of good neighbourly relations with it. We are sincerely interested in establishing a peaceful and stable Afghan State. Uzbekistan, like many other countries of the international community today, is making every possible effort and is taking practical steps to assist the Afghan people in the speedy stabilization of the situation in that country.

Objectively taking into account the real situation within and around Afghanistan, we consider one of the factors that serve to consolidate stability in Afghanistan to be measures taken to integrate that country into the political and economic system of communications and links among the countries of Central Asia. In this context, it is important to increase Afghanistan's participation in the process of creating a common market in the region. Afghanistan's participation as an observer country in the activities with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization — is very significant.

It should be noted that a particular role in improving the socio-economic situation in Afghanistan and in the development of the integrated process is being played by transport communications. In this connection, we draw attention to the importance of implementing the initiative to create an international trans-Afghan transport corridor. For our part, we are ready to expand cooperation with the Government of Afghanistan in very diverse areas, such as prospecting, power generation and local and international telecommunication lines, and so on. We assure the Assembly that this kind of economic cooperation serves the interests of Afghanistan, its neighbouring countries and the international community as a whole.

Central Asia, due to its growing geopolitical and geostrategic significance, as well as its huge natural economic and resource potential, is drawing the attention of many countries of the world community. However, Central Asia unfortunately continues to remain in focus as a region where there are continued threats and challenges to security and stability. One of the main reasons for this is continuing tension in Afghanistan. We must be seriously concerned by the situation in that country today, characterized by a trend to further deterioration against the background of significant military actions by Taliban movement.

The continuing growth in the volume, production and traffic of drugs is evoking growing concern on the part of the international community and the States of the region. In order to counter this threat, security zones must be created around the country and there must be profound structural reform in the Afghan economy. Without this, narcotics coupled with terrorism will remain the main threats to the national security of Afghanistan and to the effective functioning of the Government.

One of the serious factors complicating and aggravating the situation in the country is the huge arsenal of military technology, weapons and ammunition accumulated over the decades of war in Afghanistan. As noted by our President in his letter to the Secretary-General in 2001, the gradual process of stabilization of the situation and restoration of peaceful life in Afghanistan must be accompanied by a solution to the question of the reduction and removal of those mountains of armaments, which would make it possible to create the necessary prerequisites for preventing further militarization of this country.

We are profoundly convinced that achieving peace and stability in Afghanistan must occur not through further militarization and expansion in the scale of the use of force, but rather through demilitarization and through the implementation, with the assistance of the world community, of projects aimed chiefly at resolving the most acute economic problems, as well as by giving social support to the population of the country.

Agreed joint actions by all parties that are truly interested in stabilizing the situation and promoting reconstruction in Afghanistan will be the decisive factor in finding solutions to this problem. That is why Uzbekistan welcomed the draft resolution submitted today by the delegation of Germany. We hope that its adoption by consensus will reaffirm once again the international community's willingness to do everything possible to promote the peaceful recovery of Afghanistan.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

The General Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/62/L.7. I should like to announce

that since the introduction of the draft resolution the following countries have become sponsors: Algeria, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Cape Verde, the Central African Republic, Chile, China, Cyprus, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Gabon, Georgia, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Haiti, Honduras, India, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Malta, Mauritius, Moldova, Monaco, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Panama, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, the Republic of Korea, San Marino, Slovakia, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Trinidad and Tobago, Ukraine and Yemen.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/62/L.7?

Draft resolution A/62/L.7 was adopted (resolution 62/6).

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 19?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 4.55 p.m.